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Faculties Subjective Well-being during Pre and Post Pandemic

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Abstract : COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for faculty members in higher education institutions. This paper examines how subjective well-being (SWB), which refers to one's cognitive and affective evaluation of one's life, is influenced by faculty members' professional experiences during and post pandemic. The paper uses an explanatory research design to explore why and how SWB varies among faculty members who work remotely or non-remotely in private higher institutions in district Meerut, India. The paper employs purposive sampling to select 73 faculty members from the specialized domain of life sciences and behavioral sciences. The paper collects secondary data from research databases and primary data from an open-ended questionnaire survey based on SWB and professional experiences. The paper measures professional experiences using three variables: affect, burnout, and mindfulness. The paper also considers two demographic variables: designation and gender. The paper finds that faculty members' SWB is significantly affected by their professional experiences during and post pandemic. Faculty members who work remotely report higher levels of stress, psychological distress, and burnout than those who work non-remotely. However, some faculty members also report positive experiences during the pandemic. The study can have important implications for enhancing the well-being and performance of faculty members in higher education institution. The study can provide insights into the factors that influence faculty members' SWB and how they can be addressed through evidence-based interventions. The study can also inform policy makers and administrators about the best practices and recommendations for supporting faculty members' professional development and work-life balance in remote and non-remote settings.

IndexTerms - Affect, Burnout, Higher Education, Mindfulness, Pandemic, Subjective well-being.

ABSTRACT

7COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for faculty members in higher education institutions. This paper examines how subjective well-being (SWB), which refers to one's cognitive and affective evaluation of one's life, is influenced by faculty members' professional experiences during and post pandemic. The paper uses an explanatory research design to explore why and how SWB varies among faculty members who work remotely or non-remotely in private higher institutions in district Meerut, India. The paper employs purposive sampling to select 73 faculty members from the specialized domain of life sciences and behavioral sciences. The paper collects secondary data from research databases and primary data from an open-ended questionnaire survey based on SWB and professional experiences. The paper measures professional experiences using three variables: affect, burnout, and mindfulness. The paper also considers two demographic variables: designation and gender. The paper finds that faculty members' SWB is significantly affected by their professional experiences during and post pandemic. Faculty members who work remotely report higher levels of stress, psychological distress, and burnout than those who work non-remotely. However, some faculty members also report positive experiences during the pandemic. The study can have important implications for enhancing the well-being and performance of faculty members in higher education institution. The study can provide insights into the factors that influence faculty members' SWB and how they can be addressed through evidence-based interventions. The study can also inform policy makers and administrators about the best practices and recommendations for supporting faculty members' professional development and work-life balance in remote and non-remote settings.

KEYWORDS: AFFECT, BURNOUT, HIGHER EDUCATION, MINDFULNESS, PANDEMIC, SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING.

I. INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

The concept of subjective well-being (SWB) has gained prominence as a fundamental construct within the domain of positive psychology. Positive psychology represents a branch of psychology that foster positive facets of human experience, including happiness, well-being, and flourishing. In contrast to conventional schools of psychology, which predominant focus on mental illness and pathological conditions, positive psychology endeavors to redirect attention toward understanding the constituents of a fulfilling and meaningful life. The advent of positive psychology can be traced back to the latter half of the 20th century when psychologists commenced questioning the disproportionate emphasis placed on mental illness and deficits within the discipline. In 1998, Martin Seligman, a distinguished psychologist and former president of the American Psychological Association, advocated for a paradigm shift in psychology towards investigating positive aspects of human experience.

Within this context, subjective well-being emerged as a salient construct within positive psychology. SWB encompasses individuals' self-perceived evaluations of their own lives, encompassing both cognitive and affective dimensions. It encompasses assessments of life satisfaction, representing the evaluative component, as well as the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative emotions, representing the affective component. The seminal contributions of Ed Diener, a distinguished researcher in the field, played a pivotal role in establishing SWB as a central construct within positive psychology. Diener and his colleagues conducted extensive research on SWB, developing measures and theoretical frameworks to enhance the understanding of this multifaceted construct. They posited that SWB is influenced by a confluence of personal, social, and environmental factors. Diener's research underscored the significance of subjective experiences and the subjective evaluation of one's life as fundamental determinants of well-being. His work challenged the traditional emphasis on objective indicators of success and happiness by accentuating the subjective nature of well-being. Diener advocated for the inclusion of individuals' own evaluations and experiences in the assessment of well-being.

Subsequently, SWB has evolved into a widely explored and acknowledged construct within the realm of positive psychology. It has been extensively investigated across diverse cultures and populations. One of the major dynamic that has been studied in relation to subjective well-being has been its impact on the higher education members.

According to a study published in the Journal of Happiness Studies, students who reported higher levels of subjective well-being were more likely to be engaged in their studies and achieve higher academics performances. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) found that college students who participated in a positive psychology intervention reported improved academic performance and higher levels of subjective well-being compared to a control group. A survey by Reis and collegues (2018) of over 6,000 faculty members across 10 countries found that those who reported higher levels of well-being also reported greater job satisfaction, more supportive work environments, and lower levels of burnout.

Subjective Well-being and Global Pandemic

The pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges and disruptions to the educational landscape, requiring faculty members to adapt rapidly to remote teaching, changes in work routines, and increased workload demands. Understanding the impact of these circumstances on the SWB of faculty members is crucial for developing effective support strategies and promoting their well-being during this challenging time.

Research investigating the SWB of faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed several key findings.

There are several theories to explain that attempts to explain the relationship between subjective well-being and faculty members. Here are few examples:

Self-determination theory (SDT): SDT posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs; namely, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals experience greater well-being and are more likely to engage in positive behavior. Faculty members who have autonomy in their work, feel competent in their job, and have positive relationships with their colleagues and students may experience greater subjective well-being.

Job demand-resources model (JD-R): JD-R suggests that job demands (e.g, workload, time pressure) and job resources (e.g., social support, job control) interact to influence employee well-being and job performance. Faculty members who have high job resources and low job demands may experience greater subjective well-being.

Broaden-and-built theory (BBT): BBT proposes that positive emotions broaden an individual’s thought-action repertoire and build personal resources that promote well-being. Faculty members who experience positive emotions (e.g., joy, gratitude, interest) may be more likely to engage in creative problem-solving, build positive relationships with colleagues and students, and experience greater job satisfaction.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory: COR suggests that individuals strive to build and maintain resources (e.g., job control, social support) that are important for well-being. When these resources are threatened or lost, individuals experience stress and negative emotions. Faculty members who have access to job resources and feel secure in their job may experience greater subjective well-being.

Overall, these theories suggest that subjective well-being among faculty members is influenced by a range of factors, including job demands, job resources, social support, and positive emotion. By understanding these factors, organizations may be able to promote well-being among their faculty members and improve job satisfaction and performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research on faculty SWB before the pandemic has highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and the alignment between personal values and institutional goals. However, the pandemic has introduced additional stressors such as the rapid transition to online teaching, technological challenges, and concerns about student engagement and learning outcomes. Post-pandemic studies have indicated that providing faculty members with training, resources, and support to navigate these changes can contribute to their SWB by increasing confidence and reducing stress levels. The increased importance of studying emotions, stressors and having to live fully in the present has also emerged.

This literature review highlights research papers that discuss the relevant studies on affect, burnout, and mindfulness in faculty members.

Hafenbrack et al., (2020) investigated the impact of mindfulness at work on employee stress and well-being. Using a quasi-experimental design, the researchers implemented a mindfulness intervention in a workplace setting. They measured employee stress, well-being, and mindfulness using surveys administered before and after the intervention. The study revealed that the mindfulness intervention significantly reduced employee stress levels and improved well-being, highlighting the potential benefits of incorporating mindfulness practices in the workplace.

Singh and Ghosh (2018) investigated the role of emotional intelligence in predicting burnout and well-being among faculty members in Indian engineering colleges. They collected data through self-report surveys from a sample of faculty members. The study found that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with burnout and positively correlated with well-being among Indian faculty members.

Lomas et al., (2017) investigated the relationship between mindfulness, job satisfaction, and well-being among faculty members. Through a cross-sectional design, they collected data using self-report measures from a sample of faculty members. The findings indicated that higher levels of mindfulness were associated with greater job satisfaction and well-being.

Zhang and Gan (2017) examined the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between job burnout and subjective well-being among faculty members. They collected data through self-report surveys from a sample of faculty members. The findings revealed that work engagement partially mediated the negative relationship between job burnout and subjective well-being, suggesting that higher work engagement can enhance faculty members' well-being despite experiencing burnout.

Roeser et al., (2013) explored the impact of a mindfulness-based program on faculty members' well-being and classroom climate. Using a mixed-methods approach, they implemented a mindfulness intervention in a school setting and collected data through surveys and interviews. The study demonstrated that the mindfulness program enhanced faculty members' well-being, reduced burnout, and improved classroom climate.

Youssef-Morgan, C. M., & Luthans, F. (2013) investigated the impact of psychological capital (PsyCap) on burnout and subjective well-being among faculty members. They collected data through surveys from a sample of faculty members. The findings demonstrated that higher levels of PsyCap were associated with lower burnout and higher subjective well-being among faculty members.

Glomb et al., (2011) focused on mindfulness at work and its implications for employee well-being. Using a longitudinal design, the researchers collected data from employees over time. They assessed mindfulness, well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance using self-report surveys. The study found that mindfulness at work was positively associated with well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance, suggesting that cultivating mindfulness can have positive effects on employee outcomes.

O'Connor and McCartney (2007) examined the associations between faculty members' job stress, affective experiences, and their perceptions of student behavior. Through surveys and observations, they collected data from a sample of faculty members. The study revealed that high job stress was associated with negative affective experiences and perceptions of challenging student behaviors among faculty members.

Hall and Chandler (2005) examined the role of affective experiences and emotions in faculty members' job performance and satisfaction. Using a longitudinal design, they collected data through surveys and interviews. The study found that positive affect was positively related to job satisfaction and performance, while negative affect was negatively associated with these variables among faculty members.

Johnson et al., (2005) aimed to explore the experience of work-related stress across various occupations. The researchers employed a cross-sectional design and collected data from a diverse sample of employees. 26 occupations were selected for this study. They used surveys and interviews to assess the levels and sources of work-related stress experienced by participants. The study found that different occupations varied in the level and nature of work-related stress experienced.

Bakker et al., (2004) examined the relationship between work engagement, burnout, job satisfaction, and happiness among university faculty members. Using a survey design, they collected data from a sample of faculty members. The results showed that work engagement was positively related to job satisfaction and happiness, while burnout was negatively associated with these variables.

Tugade et al., (2004) investigated the role of positive emotions in coping with stress and fostering well-being among faculty members. Through a series of studies, including surveys and experimental designs, they found that positive emotions had a buffering effect on the relationship between stress and well-being, suggesting that experiencing positive emotions can help protect against burnout and enhance subjective well-being.

Brown and Ryan (2003) explored the benefits of being present (mindfulness) and its role in psychological well-being. The researchers conducted a series of studies employing various methodologies, including surveys and experimental designs. They assessed mindfulness, psychological well-being, positive affect, and life satisfaction. The results consistently indicated that mindfulness was positively associated with psychological well-being, including greater positive affect and life satisfaction.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To highlight the key differences of Subjective well-being considering professional experiences in remote and non-remote working faculties.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present study, the explanatory research design is considered to explicate that why a phenomena takes place and to predict the future occurrence of that phenomena. With the use of purposive sampling, 73 faculties of private higher institutions from the specialized domain of life sciences and behavioral sciences in district Meerut, India were selected. There are more than 10

institutions which have the above mentioned domain in their curriculum and offer diploma, graduation and post-graduation courses.

The secondary data is collected from the research databases like academia, research gate, and National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) and the primary data has been collected through an open-ended questionnaire survey based on subjective well-being of the professional experiences among faculties. The conduction of survey allowed collecting rich and detailed responses which lead to a more nuanced understanding of faculties' perspectives, opinions and experiences. To measure the professional experiences – affect, burnout, mindfulness during and post pandemic, i.e., classified into remote versus non remote working are considered for this study.

In addition to the above variables, other demographic variable, i.e. designation and gender have also been taken to reduce the time limit of filling the questionnaire (20-25 minutes) is used for this remote survey.

This paper *assumes* that - The interview was restricted to stressors and experiences occur in the professional areas of faculty members during and post pandemic.

The study was conducted in 2023 and hence the pandemic experiences shared in the interview are considered to be the true perception of remote work setting.

Table 1: Data distribution based on age.

Age Group	Number of Participants	Participants (%)
20-25	6	8.20
25-30	29	39.72
30-35	23	31.50
35-40	12	16.50
40-45	2	2.73
50 and above	1	1.35
Total	73	100%

Table 2: Data distribution based on Designation.

Education	Number of Participants	Participants (%)
Professors	3	4.10
Associate Professors	19	26.05
Assistant Professors	38	52.05
Others: Guest Lecturers or Ph.D. lecturers	13	17.80
Total	73	100%

Table 3: Data distribution based on gender.

Gender	Number of Participants	Participants (%)
Male	31	42.46
Female	42	57.52
Total	73	100%

Open-ended Survey: The following questions were asked in the survey –

Table 3: The opened-ended survey questions

Questions	Components of Subjective well-being
How would you describe your overall emotional experience while working remotely as a faculty member?	**Affect**
How would you describe your overall emotional experience while working from university as a faculty member?	
Are there specific factors or circumstances that contribute to positive emotions and a sense of well-being during remote work? Please provide examples.	
Are there specific factors or circumstances that contribute to positive emotions and a sense of well-being working in-person? Please provide examples.	
How would you describe your experience of remote work in terms of workload and job demands?	**Burn-out**
How would you describe your experience of in-person work in terms of workload and job demands?	
Have you noticed any changes in your work-life balance since transitioning to remote work? If yes, how has it impacted your well-being?	

Have you noticed any changes in your work-life balance since transitioning to non -remote work? If yes, how has it impacted your well-being?	
How would you describe your experience of being fully present and engaged in your work while working remotely?	**Mindfulness**
How would you describe your experience of being fully present and engaged in your work while working from office/classrooms?	
Have you noticed any changes in your levels of present-moment awareness and attention since practicing mindfulness during remote work? If so, please explain.	
Have you noticed any changes in your levels of present-moment awareness and attention since practicing mindfulness during non -remote work? If so, please explain.	

V. ANALYSIS

Analysis and Interpretation of Professional Experiences (SWB) :-

Table 4: Interpretations based on the analysis of the subjective well-being considering professional experiences of the faculties to highlight the key differences

Based ON	Remote Working /During Pandemic	Non-Remote Working/Post-Pandemic
Affect	Pandemic has taken a major toll in the lives of everyone in the world. Here, the researcher is especially focusing on the significant change in the Indian higher education systems that is converted from non-remote to remote and post pandemic; back to the normal with minor changes. The faculties faced the issues like insecurities in job, financial problems and grief and bereavement of their loved ones. While on the other hand, the students have been at ease of attending the classes in online mode, with the benefit of keeping their cameras off and doing multi-tasking. The students also feel much secured in accordance to learning and preparation for the examination. In the post-pandemic educational setting, the students started to find difficulty to adapt with the learning. Where some of the faculties and students found situations very opportunistic/ feasible like appointed a job in virtual universities and for the sincere students it's a new exposure for the enrolment in the courses provided by the top most universities all around the world in remote setting.	
Burn-out	The lockdown setting during the global pandemic had been a new experience. Adapting to this venture was challenging as the participants mentioned to be involved not only in work during so-called working hours but were also taking care of other house hold responsibilities. These mainly included taking care of children or pets at home or there helplessness with the noises and other uncontrollable factors. One of the additional aspects was learn new system to note attendance and all the other necessary documents which were noted via pen and paper setting. Here, the researcher wants to point that they were adhering to multiple roles in the same setting. On the other hand the students were finding it difficult to understand difficult concepts and practical or field learning was restricted to things at home, hence, the retention was also bare minimum. Students had to find new ways of making notes and learning from different sources and not just classrooms. In the non-remote working system, faculties had reported better ability to categorize their work and an easiness to explore through information collected. On average, the faculty-student interaction has been more in physical setting as well.	
Mindfulness	The unpredictable disruption of the pandemic increased the amount of stress causing agents in everyday life. The faculties were challenged to learn new technologies including virtual classrooms, conferencing, attendance records, and meetings and to manage a class full of students virtually. This lead to many distractions, anxieties and sometimes loneliness. Here, the researcher wants to highlight the overlap of emotional and subjective well-being with inability to be completely present and engaged in teaching the students. In the post pandemic era, the faculties and students have found to establish effective communication and compassion towards the process of learning.	

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present paper aimed to explore the relationship between subjective well-being (SWB) and faculty members. Firstly, many faculty members have experienced increased stress and psychological distress due to the sudden transition to remote teaching and the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic. The shift to online instruction has necessitated significant adjustments in teaching methodologies, technological proficiency, and communication with students, leading to feelings of overwhelm and anxiety. Additionally, faculty members have faced increased pressure to meet the demands of remote teaching while also managing their

own personal challenges related to the pandemic, such as health concerns, caregiving responsibilities, and financial uncertainties. The accumulation of these stressors can contribute to feelings of burnout and decreased SWB.

On the other hand, some faculty members have also reported positive experiences during the pandemic. The flexibility of remote teaching has provided opportunities for innovative pedagogical approaches, increased autonomy in course design, and new avenues for collaboration among colleagues. Faculty members who have been able to adapt successfully to the changes and find meaning in their work have reported higher levels of SWB.

To support the SWB of faculty members during and post pandemic, various strategies can be implemented. Institutions can prioritize the provision of resources and support systems that address faculty members' specific needs, such as training in online/offline teaching methodologies, technological assistance, and mental health support services. Creating opportunities for faculty members to connect with colleagues, share experiences, and receive peer support can also contribute to their well-being.

Moreover, fostering a sense of community and belonging within the academic environment, even in remote settings, is essential. Encouraging open communication, recognizing faculty members' efforts and contributions, and promoting work-life balance through flexible policies and expectations can help mitigate the negative impact on SWB.

Hence, this study aims to highlight the experience of faculty members during and post lockdown.

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